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CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

A Quarterly devoted to Christianity and Social Reconstruction

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CHRISTIAN ACTION

Christianity and Society is published by Christian Action, a fellowship of Christians concerned with the social implications of their faith. Christian Action seeks:

To understand current social issues in the light of central Christian convictions.

To provide a fellowship for mutual support and criticism among Christians who are profoundly concerned about the social problems of our time.

To encourage groups of Christians to act creatively and responsibly in their local communities as well as in national and international affairs.

To develop a core of common convictions and principles for the strengthening of the Christian social witness.

New ways to influence the churches and secular society in the direction of greater responsibility to all members of the community.

Christian Action is a voluntary organization. It is not officially related to the social education and action agencies of the denominations or of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., but it seeks to co-operate with and support them.

Everyone who is committed to these fundamental purposes and interests is invited to join Christian Action. There are members in every part of the country, and in every major denomination.

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CHRISTIANITY and SOCIETY

EDITORIALS

The Campaign: The Issues Are Drawn

Election campaigns are, like all of historical events, unpredictable. Consider the present Presidential campaign. After the conventions were held everyone hailed the nomination of two "moderate" candidates and the elimination of foreign policy from the election debate. Eisenhower's virtues and prestige were so great that even an organization as far left of center as Christian Action felt that it would have to be impartial in the campaign. In a few short months the situation has changed completely.

Historical events are created by personalities and vast historical forces in which personalities operate. We cannot predict future events because we do not know the forces well enough, and the actions of the personalities are not predictable. Thus, for instance, we failed to predict or anticipate present developments because we underestimated the force of inertia in the Republican Party. The Eisenhower victory seemed to regenerate the party but it turned out that this was not the case.

There was another aspect to the situation, however, because everyone overestimated Eisenhower's capacity as a political leader. It now turns out that he was a symbol rather than a leader. We have had some experiences in recent years with other nations with symbols, mostly military men, who failed to master the historical forces which they symbolized. In any case, Eisenhower has unpredictably become the prisoner and tool of the forces in the party over which he was supposed to be victorious. All his arguments are the old familiar ones. He analyzes world events as if we were not in a vast world revolution; he defines the "mess" in Washington on the one hand in terms of corruption, and on the other hand in terms of "bungling" in foreign policy. In the second charge he verges on the edge of dishonesty, for he was personally involved in almost all the policies which he now describes as bungling. His charge of corruption has lost its sharp edge because of the predicament in which his running mate finds himself; not because the young man was in any sense flagrantly dishonest but because his predicament clearly reveals that the distinction between honesty and dishonesty, and particularly between an honest Republican Party and a dishonest Democratic one, is not as sharp as Eisenhower assumes. Thus the anticipated victorious campaign of a General who had a tremendous prestige behind him has degenerated into a rather pathetic mouthing of cliches.

There was one other unpredictable development in the campaign, and that is the emergence of the Democratic candidate as a national figure. Nothing in recent decades of our national history has been quite as thrilling as the impact of Stevenson upon the public conscience and consciousness. He is a man of very large mold. People speak rather easily of his rhetoric and wit, but what is more impressive is the quality of his statesmanship. He deals with our

foreign perplexities in terms of mature wisdom rather than in terms of campaign slogans and charges. He has a well considered philosophy which he sincerely presses upon every group which he addresses. It is a rigorous philosophy which demands that partial and particular interests of every description must not be pressed at the expense of the general welfare. He has a passion for resolving controversy without, however, engaging in political compromise. Consider, for instance, his speech in Richmond where on the one hand he showed such a great sympathy for the plight of the South in its engagement with Northern industrialism, but on the other hand made no bones about the necessity of advancing the democratic standards of race relations.

Thus a campaign which was supposed to leave decent people complacent because the election or defeat of neither candidate would seem to be important, has turned into one which makes us very excited about the outcome, for it is not only a contest between conservativism and liberalism in domestic politics, between responsibility and irresponsibility in foreign politics, but between considered statesmanship and politics by slogans. It will be interesting to see whether the American people have sufficient political maturity to respond to this kind of a contest in the way that we would like.

Reinhold Niebuhr

The Meaning of the Nixon Episode

The American people recently had a heavy dose of political education. A bomb exploded in California and its repercussions demonstrated more facts about the nature of popular political judgments than any incident in recent times. We should try to ponder this episode without prejudice and without illusion.

A striking feature of the public reaction to the disclosure of Senator Nixon's private expense fund was the magnitude of the shock it caused. There was no mistaking its genuineness. It rolled across party lines. Great newspapers committed to Eisenhower and Nixon saw in the disclosures a prima facie case of unethical conduct—something not proved, but on its face so questionable as to create a grave hazard for the ticket. The distinction so sharply brought out by Senator Fulbright between what is demonstrably illegal and what, although legal, is on its face unethical, was dramatically shown in the public reaction to the news. Even the *Wall Street Journal* carried the story in all its crudity, including this portion, which seems to have quickly dropped out of public discussion: "Mr. Smith explained that the money was put up by 50 to 100 wealthy Californians because they thought Mr. Nixon was an 'outstanding spokesman in the Senate for the free enterprise system we believe in.' "

Then a miracle happened. By what Elmer Davis has called an exceptionally "brilliant" strategy the Republican Party leaders were able to turn a major political hazard into what now actually looks like an asset. Not only was the scent of something unclean blown away—for the time being, at least—but the Senator quickly elevated himself to the role of hero and near-martyr. He was able to seize upon relatively inconsequential circumstances and weave them into a garment to shield him from the chill political winds that had begun to blow.

Why was this possible? Why were people whose initial reaction was one of surprised outrage—including, it would seem, General Eisenhower himself—so quickly persuaded to regard the California story as comparable to that of another Senator whose wife was employed by the government as his secretary? Why did it not occur to them to consider what would have happened if Senator Sparkman had been found to be the recipient of a special expense fund financed by a group of top labor leaders? These are sobering questions, not to be quickly or categorically answered. It is to be feared that when they are raised, as they must be,

all over the country some very cynical answers will be given. It is, of course, just this kind of thing that accounts for a remark once made by Harold Laski on a New York platform: "I never heard the word 'politics' used as an expletive until I came to this country!"

But is not such disillusion premature? Not the least impressive feature of this remarkable affair is the evidence it furnishes of the capacity of the people for moral indignation. That the American mind is ambivalent—or should we say multivalent? —with respect to values is one of the basic data of politics. It is important to remember that the slogan "moral man and immoral society" is one of those true sayings which are reversible. Sometimes the masses react on a level of feeling and commitment that shames the individual citizen. The tragedy is, as Dickens brought out in striking fashion in *A Tale of Two Cities,* that the crowd can swing from moral exaltation to something very near to an emotional debauch. The explanation may be left to the depth psychologists and the theologians. Both may very likely be right!

But it is vitally important, as our national elections approach, to discern the political significance of this human propensity. It reveals the non-moral factors in the political decisions of good people. It illustrates their vast capacity for rationalization. It works havoc with the pietist notion that the crux of the political situation is the putting of "good" people in office. Sad to relate, the more conspicuously good a person is, in terms of conventional virtues, the more readily he may become the instrument of anti-social forces. The California episode should remind us, as we ponder the issues of the present campaign, of one of the major emphases of the social gospel: that the quality of political behavior cannot be permanently improved without correcting the defects in our political and social structure that put a premium on exploitiveness and self-aggrandizement.

F. Ernest Johnson

The Limits of American Power

The disposition of Eisenhower, Dulles, and other responsible Republican leaders to adopt the polemics of the less responsible opposition, and hold the Administration responsible for the extent of a vast world revolution, raises an interesting theological point in our political situation. If there is anything that we can contribute from the standpoint of Christian faith to a nation as powerful as ours, it would be a sense of its impotence and lack of majesty before the Supreme Majesty which governs the nations. Human history is undoubtedly a realm of action and responsibility, and in this realm there are many things which we have done and left undone which must be censured. But it is also a realm of destiny beyond the power of decision of any particular man or nation. It is intolerable to imagine an America so powerful that we are held responsible for vast historical events in every part of the globe beyond our knowledge or contriving. Nothing is more dangerous to a powerful nation than the temptation to obscure the limits of its power. It will be our undoing if we imagine ourselves the masters of contemporary history. Perhaps these are just aberrations of a political campaign, but one has the uneasy suspicion that the pretensions implied in these judgments spring from deeper sources in the national psyche.

Reinhold Niebuhr

The National Council on Christian Responsibility in the 1952 Election

Each election year is a year of decision. How the American people vote on November 4th will determine to no small extent the over-all direction of our country in the years ahead. Decisions we as a people make affect profoundly, for good or for ill, not only citizens within our borders, but millions of persons throughout the world.

As Christians we believe that God cares

what happens in politics, because politics affects His children everywhere. Therefore we believe that Christians have a responsibility to participate in the political process by voting and by seeking to apply Christian principles in their voting. Intelligent and conscientious voting is the moral duty of every American citizen who is genuinely concerned about his neighbor, whether that neighbor lives next door or half way around the earth. A free election at its best should be an expression of a whole people saying what they believe most deeply about the direction they want their country to take.

The issues at the polls are often obscure and confused. Therefore, the responsible voter must make an earnest attempt to know the facts, understand the issues, and express his convictions at the polls. An election is not a popularity contest. It is a struggle between alternative policies and programs which affect each one of us.

The responsible voter will study all the basic issues at stake in the election in the light of his religious convictions and will judge candidates and parties accordingly. He will study the voting record of candidates and their parties, the party platforms, as well as what the candidates themselves say.

The responsible voter will base his decision on what he considers best for the total community, the well-being of all the people. He will not respond to sectional, racial or class appeals. He will take into account the total program of the candidates and parties seeking power, rather than base his decision on one single issue, however important that issue may seem to him.

There are many issues at stake in the current election. On a number of these issues Christians in America have spoken. They have expressed their convictions through their own denominations and through national church associations. The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. has dealt with the following issues. In foreign policy it has stated that "the United States must cooperate with all nations and dependent areas in their struggle for freedom and justice," and that our country should "continue and increase its support of the United Nations and its specialized agencies." It has commended "the action of the United Nations in resisting aggression in Korea." The National Council has supported the U. S. "program of economic aid and technical assistance to the underdeveloped areas of the world," and the principles embodied in the Reciprocal Trade Agreements which seek to promote economic health in the world community by eliminating excessive tariff barriers. It has urged the revision of our immigration and naturalization laws so that a larger number of refugees, regardless of color, creed or national origin, can begin a new life on our soil.

Here in America the National Council of Churches has supported efforts to preserve and extend civil rights and civil liberties for all our people. It has spoken against racial discrimination and segregation in all sectors of our society. It affirms the necessity for a free exchange of ideas in our democracy, and condemns the attempt to impose conformity or to silence people by character assassination, guilt by association, or the use of unfounded charges. The National Council supports efforts to improve the standards of ethical conduct in public office, local, state and national.

We urge all citizens to study the position of their churches on major public questions as they face this election. It is equally important that we pray and urge others to pray for guidance. When we are honest with ourselves, we have to confess that we have all, to greater or less degree, come short of the full glory of Christian citizenship. We find it difficult to be fully honest with ourselves as partisans, but when we kneel before God our Father, we know He looks upon the heart. Let us kneel before Him in penitence and ask for the cleansing power of His forgivenness, for wisdom in making right political choices and for moral strength and Christian humility for those on whom the fearful responsibilities of

political power are presently to fall. Let us pray to the Heavenly Father, who knows no nation and no party, to help the Christian people and the churches of this country to impress upon all citizens the need that His will be done. By taking seriously the privileges and responsibilities of living in a free society we can work together in the common task of making America worthy of its heritage as a nation under God.

A Statement passed by the General Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., September 24, 1952.

A Catholic View of the Election

In the concrete political order the best a Christian can usually hope for is an approximation to his principles; to wait upon ideal realizations before committing himself may mean that the Christian will wait forever, and in vain. In the meantime, others will build the city.

If, for example, there is an election year when the editors are united in their belief that one candidate clearly offers a closer approximation to The Commonweal's political and social principles than another, then they can withhold their endorsement from that candidate, in the name of devotion to "non-partisanship," only at the risk of intellectual and moral dishonesty.

We have . . . respected both candidates and listened with great interest to what they have had to say. But as we have listened, we have been increasingly impressed with the level of one candidate's campaign, and depressed and disillusioned by the progressive deterioration of the other candidate's promise.

A weighing of the evidence therefore convinces us that, in the context of our own political and social principles, we would be avoiding our editorial responsibility did we not now state this conviction: the election of Governor Stevenson and the defeat of General Eisenhower is a matter of vital importance to the nation. . . .

We . . . wish to make clear that in our endorsement . . . we speak only for ourselves as those responsible for the editorial policy of this magazine. We certainly do not claim to speak for the Catholics in this country, or even for our loyal readers and subscribers. . . .

When the General began his campaign he maintained that the only real issue facing the voters was foreign policy, peace or war. The Democratic candidate continues to maintain this. But somewhere along the line the General discovered "the mess in Washington." His preoccupation with it has eclipsed all other interests ever since.

This "mess," he now claims, is the "major issue." And so, while he clasps to his official bosom every McCarthy and Jenner in his own party with one arm, he uses the other to gesticulate angrily against lack of integrity among the Democrats. He has, apparently, subscribed to a novel political doctrine—salvation comes by faith alone. Even Republican scoundrels are saved, but Democratic saints are forever damned. The issues?—Let's get back to that "mess in Washington"!

In the meantime, Adlai Stevenson goes about the land, carefully, and brilliantly, defining his stand on things as they are. His position, as defined, represents a revolution in American politics. Subscribing to the broad social and diplomatic policies of the past twenty years, he has yet demonstrated a genuine awareness of the dangers of over-centralization. . . .

Ours is an age of anxiety, and so it is a spawning ground for the demagogue. Cynical or vicious men, at such a time, can gain reputation and power by exploiting anxiety and offering some easy relief. The General has refused to repudiate the alarmingly large number of these men in his party, and so as the threat of their influence becomes greater, this campaign becomes, in part, a contest between reason and emotion, patience and frustration. . . .

For these reasons, among others, we wholeheartedly endorse the candidacy of Adlai Stevenson.

Excerpts from an editorial, "Our Choice for President", in *The Commonweal,* September 26, 1952.

Freedom and Loyalty in Economic Life: Labor

Will Herberg

The claims of the labor union upon its members, and the limits of those claims, viewed in the light of the problem of ultimate allegiance.

The problem of loyalty and freedom in economic life is not primarily a problem of economics; it is essentially a moral and religious question. It is a moral question because it is so obviously related to our duties and responsibilities to our fellowmen in one of the most crucial areas of life; it is a religious question because it touches the basic problem of human existence, the problem of one's ultimate allegiance. The two—ethics and religion—are at bottom one, for in the last analysis it is one's faith, the kind of god one serves, that defines the kind of person one is and the kind of life one leads or strives to lead. Let us therefore consider the problem from this fundamental moral and religious standpoint, without of course neglecting the particular economic and social contexts in which concrete problems of freedom and loyalty do in fact arise.

I

Lloyd Fisher, the well-known industrial sociologist, defines totalitarianism as "the demand for total loyalty to an organization, whether that organization be the state, the church, the corporation, or the trade union." This definition represents a true and profound insight. Our conception of democracy differs so radically from the so-called "Continental", or Rousseauistic, conception precisely because it is *pluralistic*: it refuses to grant *any* social institution or organization, not even the state, total control and jurisdiction over human life. All social institutions and organizations, even the most inclusive, are in their very nature *partial,* limited first by the claims of other social organizations, and ultimately by the fundamental rights of the human person, which no social order pretending to be democratic can refuse to recognize. Diversity, even conflict of loyalties is, therefore, not something to be deplored and eliminated; it is rather that which gives the distinctively democratic character to our society. "The great hope of a democratic society", as Chancellor Clark Kerr of the University of California pointed out in his notable commencement address last June, "lies with the multiplicity of allegiances to family, government, church, employer, trade union, and one's self. Conflict among these loyalties is the condition of rational self-development and individual morality." As against the all-embracing party-state of totalitarianism, the all-embracing corporation envisioned by Elton Mayo, the all-embracing union projected by Frank Tannenbaum, we must insist on the *limited*-function party, the *limited*-function state, the *limited*-function corporation, the *limited*-function union—acknowledging the claim to limitlessness only in God alone.

Here we come to the heart of the matter. The claim to total allegiance, to total jurisdiction and control, is a claim that only God can make, and when any social institution makes such claim, it is in effect claiming to be worshipped as God. Totalitarianism in party, state, church, corporation, or union is a form of idolatrous self-deification, abhorrent to the fundamental commitment of Judeo-Christian faith defined in the First Commandment: "I am the Lord thy God . . .; thou shalt have no other gods before me." If we acknowledge the total sovereignty of God, we cannot conceivably acknowledge the total claims of any earthly institution, no matter how extensive, necessary, and socially useful it may be.

But the very same principle that forbids

us to acknowledge the absolute claim of social institutions also requires us to recognize this legitimate partial claim to our loyalty and support. We cannot properly serve God unless we strive to strengthen the foundations of freedom, order, and justice in society, and this implies an attitude of basic social responsibility. Every social institution has its claim upon us, which we must acknowledge wholeheartedly because it is a claim that flows from our responsibility to God and our neighbor.

How, then, shall we order the various claims and loyalties that confront us in the ongoing course of social life? There is no fixed or final rule that will absolve us from the responsibility of decision in each crucial situation. We may say with Herbert Butterfield, the Cambridge historian: "It is by loving God first that men find their true direction; for it is only this that puts the rest of our loves in their proper proportion." This, indeed, is the principle at the heart of Jewish and Christian ethics, but it enhances rather than diminishes the responsibility of decision in every concrete situation. It is still necessary to decide in situations where loyalties conflict just which loyalty is to override which, just which allegiance is to be regarded as primarily operative under the particular circumstances.

By and large, I think we are all agreed that our allegiance to the state, because it is so comprehensive and involves the common interests of the national community, should take precedence over other and more restricted loyalties. But this cannot be translated into a formal obligation of implicit obedience to everything the state decrees or demands. There is still the moral law and our responsibility to God. Christian abolitionists a century ago defied the fugitive slave laws, and there are an increasing number of individuals and institutions who are violating the racial segregation laws in the South on the ground that compulsory racial segregation is against the moral law. It is a grave responsibility to take a stand against the state, but it is a stand that must sometimes be taken, and even where we may not agree with the scruple of conscience that leads a man to refuse to obey the law, we must recognize his obligation to obey his conscience—which does not, of course, deprive society of its right to protect itself and the common interest against the possible disruptive consequences of such conscientious disobedience.

We are all one here, I think, in detesting the notorious disloyalty of the communists and their fellow-travelers. But it is important to recognize that it is not on any formal principle of "my country right or wrong" that we condemn them. Thoreau took a stand against the government in the Mexican War, and many of our finest citizens did much the same in the first world war a generation ago. Why do we honor them, whether we agree with them or not, and condemn the communists? Is it not basically because we know that Thoreau and Norman Thomas took their stand out of a deep devotion to what they held to be the best interests of the American people, while the communists stand convicted of a treacherous conspiracy to sell out the nation, democracy, and mankind to the world-enslaving ambitions of a foreign totalitarian despot? It is thus ultimately a moral judgment on the *content* of their actions, rather than the violation of the formal principle, that is involved.

Let us then recognize that we cannot, in principle, erect an absolute and eternal hierarchy of allegiances, with the state, or perhaps the church, at the top. The shifting circumstances of actual social life do not permit such fixed schemes. Our basic obligation remains the same, but how it is to be implemented in the ordering of our allegiances cannot be stated once and for all; it depends too much on the relativities and contingencies of the concrete situation.

It is necessary to state this because there is a tendency today in our well-justified revulsion against communist treachery, to interpret loyalty to America to mean total obedience and unquestioning conformity. Mr. Paul Blanshard, for example, thinks

it "un-American" and disloyal for Catholics to assert that they would disobey a law banning parochial schools and compelling parents to send their children to the secular public schools. But such an attitude on the part of Catholics is surely in line with the best of democratic tradition, which has always rejected the pretensions of the state to a monopoly of social and cultural life. Democracy means pluralism—the shifting balance and interplay of interests and institutions, each with limited functions and therefore with limited claims to jurisdiction and allegiance.

II

Let us, in the light of these general remarks, consider some specific questions of particular relevance to the labor situation today.

Are workers who go on strike at the call of their union in defiance of the appeals, or even the demands, of the government necessarily disloyal to the nation? There is a growing volume of public sentiment that would answer strongly in the affirmative, and we can well understand the impatience and resentment that many strikes in this period of emergency must provoke. But the attitude that regards strikes "against the government" as inherently wrong and disloyal seems to me to imply a basic misunderstanding of democracy. For under democracy, governmental action is necessarily and properly, in part at least, the resultant of group pressures, and it may often be necessary for an economic or social group to stand up against the government in order to counterbalance the pressure of other groups and thus achieve a more tolerable balance of justice. Specifically, justice in industrial relations is, by and large, best attained if a labor union does its utmost to present and defend the interests of the workers it represents. Of course, the "public interest" must take precedence, but who is to say what the "public interest" is in any particular situation? Is the government the infallible oracle of the "public interest"? By no means! A labor union has the right to believe that its program in a certain situation comes closer to the best interests of the nation than the program of the employers or even the "recommendations" of some governmental commission; and if it has the right to believe that, it has the obligation to act on its conviction. Of course, there are limits to the freedom of group action—irremediable damage to the acknowledged vital interests of the community cannot be permitted—and there is always the need to devise less violent and costly procedures of group conflict; strikes can never be justified except as a last resort. But freedom of group conflicts—yes, let us not be afraid to use the word, "conflict"—is implied in both the theory and the practice of democracy. The freedom of a democratic society is the freedom of individual and group action within the limits set by the common understanding of the community; the order of a democratic society is the dynamic order that emerges from this interplay of social forces; the justice of a democratic society is the always relative and always improvable justice that is achieved through the assertion of claim against claim, interest against interest. By and large, a labor union best fulfils its responsibility to society by striving to represent, honestly and conscientiously, the interests of its members.

Since the labor union, like any other social group, is properly a limited-function institution, the demands that the union makes on its members should be limited as much as possible to the concerns that give the labor union its basic purpose and justification in society—I mean the economic concerns that enter into the labor contract. On this question, I wrote some years ago a widely noted article, the title of which contains its thesis: "For 'Limited' Against 'Total' Unionism" (*Labor and the Nation,* April-May 1946). I would entirely agree with the remarks made on this head by Chancellor Kerr in the address from which I have already quoted.

> Of the unions [says Dr. Kerr] I would ask that they reconsider the new unionism, where they have adopted it, and return to the narrower issues of wages,

hours, and working conditions. If its members choose to express themselves politically through their trade union organizations, I see no objection—but the politics of the union member should not be determined with his admission card to the union. . . . The individual member, having contracted into the union, ought to have preserved the right to contract out on all those issues which are not directly relevant to the union contract.

The claim of the union on the member is not a total claim; it is a claim that extends only over the area in which the union is properly the representative of the worker, what Professor Perlman has called the "central core of labor's interest". This "central core" is not always easy to set off and define, but the principle is clear: the further a union wanders from the nuclear job-interest, the less binding is its claim upon the loyalty and obedience of its members. By becoming a member, a man makes the union his representative in all matters relating to the labor contract; he does not make it his representative on matters of politics, or education, or social welfare in general. The union is, in Philip Taft's term, a "single-purpose organization", and so it should remain. It is not good, either for labor or for democracy, to have any one organization, not even a labor union, claim total jurisdiction over, and unlimited representation of, the concerns and interests of its members. That way lies totalitarianism.

In the narrower economic area, the union has an undoubted claim upon the loyalty and support of its members, and this claim is one of the union man's deepest obligations. But it is not absolute or total, even in the narrower field. If conscientious disobedience of the dictates of the state is conceivable, and there are few today who would deny that it is so conceivable, then surely a similar conscientious disobedience of the decisions of one's union is not beyond the realm of possibility. The union is a very useful, indeed indispensable, institution in modern industrial society, but it is not God. There are cases when it becomes one's obligation to God and one's responsibility to family or community to take a stand against the union to which one may be deeply loyal. This is conceivable, and it should be so stated, but I am frank to say that I recall in my own experience very few cases warranting such conscientious defiance of bona-fide labor organizations. American labor organizations are, by and large, so moderate and responsible in their public dealings that even the most morally sensitive union member would seem to me to be well advised to go along in a disciplined manner.

But I would call attention to the qualifications, "bona-fide labor organization." What I have said does not apply to an organization under communist control. For a communist-controlled union is not a bona-fide union at all and is not part of the labor movement; it is simply an instrument of the communist "fifth column." An honest and conscientious worker owes no allegiance to such a union, even though he may be forced under the circumstances to remain a member of it. It is his enemy, as it is the enemy of labor and democracy; his relation to it must be governed by this understanding. Tactics, of course, are another matter, a matter of expediency, depending on time, place, and circumstance.

III

All that I have said boils down to this conviction: that nothing in this world—no movement, institution, or organization—is absolute; everything stands under the judgment of God and the moral law that is defined by our ultimate allegiance to God. Total claims on the part of any social institution, or of society as a whole, are never to be allowed; all social organizations and institutions, including the state, are of limited function, limited jurisdiction, limited power, and therefore can make only limited claims to loyalty. This is the dictate both of religion and democracy. But social institutions and organizations are of the utmost importance in the life of mankind, and each has a legitimate claim

upon the loyalty and support of the individual. The tension between the limited claim that must be allowed and the total pretensions which must be denied is further complicated by the often conflicting claims of various social institutions, each with a legitimate function to perform. No permanent hierarchy of claims or infallible rule of priority of allegiance can be framed. In the end, it all comes down to a responsible decision as the individual stands in the crucial situation face to face with his God and his fellowmen. In such a crucial situation of decision the resources upon which the individual can draw are ultimately the resources of a responsible faith.

Addendum: Teachers and "Loyalty"

Another example, taken from a widely different field, may help to illustrate my thesis. I have in mind the problem of freedom and loyalty, as it affects the teacher —more specifically, the teacher in a college or university. To whom or to what does he owe his primary loyalty as teacher? I think there is only one possible answer: he owes his primary loyalty to the truth as he sees it. That does not mean that the teacher is not a citizen and may disregard his civic obligations; it simply means that the teacher in a college or university can best fulfil his civic obligation by pursuing his research and teaching with a single mind to the truth. It therefore follows that if a teacher is certified as professionally competent, he should be permitted to pursue his academic work however heterodox his opinions may be. But this again is a matter of good faith.

Because it is a matter of good faith, it has no relevance whatever to communists. It is my conviction that no communist, whether or not he is a card-holder, should be permitted in any post whatever in any non-communist educational institution. But this drastic policy of exclusion is not suggested because of the "subversive" character of the doctrines that communist teachers propagate. As a matter of fact, communist teachers are generally carefully instructed by the party *not* to give themselves away by any overt communist propaganda. Their usefulness lies in other directions—primarily, in what they can do through informal social contact to "soften up" the young people they meet, and prepare them for the kill at other hands, perhaps through some front organization on the campus. The ban against communists is justified because communism is, to use a very pregnant distinction of Sidney Hook's, not a heresy, but a *conspiracy*. Every communist, insofar as he is organizationally connected at one or another remove with the Communist Party—and it is only of such that I am speaking—is *ipso facto* an agent of the communist conspiracy to enslave mankind to the totalitarian despots in the Kremlin; there seems to me not the slightest shred of reason why such people should be employed in any capacity by an American educational institution. It is quite absurd to maintain that a professor's "outside" activities are not relevant to his tenure; no one would propose that a university keep on its staff a brilliant mathematician who never says an untoward word in his classes, but who manages to convey to the young people with whom he is on friendly terms that after all, alcoholic addiction or sexual promiscuity may not be so bad. By any realistic standard of ethics, the communist on the campus who is engaged in entrapping young people is far more vicious and far more dangerous than the kind of character I have mentioned. It may often be difficult to pin down the communist, and great care should of course be taken to protect the genuine academic rights of teachers, but the principle, I think, is clear.

The Integrity of the Church

Alexander Miller

Social action and the whole calling of the Church.

Discussion of the quality of the Church's life is involved in a double paradox. In the first place we have to acknowledge that in making the Gospel known and believed there is no substitute for a Christian life and a believing community. One is constantly having to remind younger students, for example, who have vibrant hopes of converting the campus by the sheer brilliance of their Christian rhetoric, that they had better rest their hopes on a pure life rather than a quick and Christian wit. That way is more exacting but a good deal more promising. Yet the Church can neither manipulate the quality of its own life nor count on it. And in all its work of witness it has to be continually pointing away from itself to Christ, in the recognition that the best of human achievement obscures Him as much as it declares Him, and that the Kingdom's cause always goes forward in spite of the church, not because of it.

In the second place, at the level of political and social influence, the Church also knows that its impact on social forms depends again on the quality of its life: and yet not simply, for again the Church has always to witness by confession as well as by accomplishment. And more: the integrity of the Church, so far from being directly related to its public influence, is frequently in inverse ratio to it. The Church may be and has been at once dominant and decadent. (It has also been on occasion, decadent without being dominant.) While the Church cannot seek the catacombs for the catacombs' own sake, its distance from the catacombs can be the measure of its failure.

For the contemporary Church in these United States the catacombs are a distant and not even a nostalgic memory. For no discoverable reason all the main-line denominations go on growing. The faith is on the boom. The Churches operate on a bull market.

In such a situation, while recognizing that the relation between the church's integrity and its public influence is neither simple nor direct, there is good ground for the most rigorous self-scrutiny on the part of the Christian community. I take it that Christian Action is simply one expression of this self-critical concern.

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Or is it? I have been involved these last weeks in long-drawn correspondence with members of the movement, in opposite ends of the country, who are exercised on just this point. One is concerned about what looks to him like the preparation of a new Protestant political line, in which we match the idolatry of the Christian Right by an equally disastrous idolatry, and equate the humane and liberal values with the Protestant faith. It is clear that these values are neither simply related to Protestantism (*cf.* Nichols. *Democracy and the Churches*), nor historically dependent on Protestantism, nor in our own day a monopoly of Protestant folk. The other correspondent says more simply that he is not interested in finding a Christian rationale for the politics of the ADA, and that it does not take Christian Action to make him vote for Stevenson. What he wants from us is the most basic kind of critique of Christian worship, preaching and theology; a new and persistent and corporate reflection upon the very roots of our common life in Christ. The trouble is that this second brother is outside the Church and won't get in. He does not know how much of such costly reflection goes daily forward, and one suspects that what he really wants is that Christian Action should give him a substitute for the church-on-the-corner, fairly if not fully free from spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

* * * *

What is the relation between our immediate social-political *raison d'etre* and the deep matters of faith? Is it simply that we draw our basic spiritual sustenance from the congregations of which we are a part, and set ourselves in Christian Action to battle reaction within the Church, and recruit more Christians to battle it without? Such an account of the matter is not entirely misleading, but it can hardly be adequate.

It cannot be adequate because, in the first place, "liberalism" and "reaction" no longer define for us, as they once did, what the Communists would call "the front of struggle." The issues now are more subtle, the battle more confused. There is still much shouting from the old ramparts, and as long as we have our McCarthys and McCarrans we shall need to keep the terms: but we shall need too to be wary of them, because over most of the embattled field the even lines have been dissolved in a general melee. (There is a useful article on the role of the true "liberal" in such times as these by Joseph C. Harsch in *The Reporter* for Sept. 30, 1952. *Are Liberals Obsolete?*)

This means, in the second place and more significantly, that we can no longer check our fighting stance by simply glancing along the line of battle. In the old days that line had been pretty sharply defined for us by the conjunction of a "progressive" theology and a generally socialist analysis. The issue was not as to where the line lay, but whether we had the courage to hold it and if possible push it forward. But in the general advance of the liberal line the situation has radically changed. We have taken some positions that must be consolidated; we have been forced back at some points so that there is grave need to win back what has been lost; and in some places we have advanced so far that we find ourselves on treacherous ground, and have to improvise new tactics.

> An illustration of the way in which the Christian "progressive" may be taken by surprise comes out of Britain in 1945. When Attlee displaced Churchill I had letters from friends in Britain confessing their bewilderment about what to do next. It had been axiomatic for so many years that the duty of the Christian progressive was to "get the Tories out." Now that they *were* out . . . what next? And since it has become ever clearer that whether the Tories are in or out makes only superficial difference to Britain's future and to Britain's fate—when the issues hang not on party choices in Britain so much as subtle shifts of power in America, and nice calculations about the tolerable weight of arms in view of Russian pressure abroad and workers' discontent at home —it is easy to understand the decrease of fighting fury and the inclination in church circles to seek "a third dimension" in which difficult choices look comfortingly insignificant.

This can be a panicky business: it is no longer so easy to distinguish friend and foe; it is easy to persuade ourselves, fighting alone and surrounded, that the ground we're on is not worth holding. We long for the old days when the base was in sight, and the banners; when we knew what we fought for and loved what we knew. The temptation now is to dive for the thicket or slide into the ditch.

All of us know how hard it is, compared say with the '30s, to shape up a movement for social action and to keep it at fighting pitch. So many one-time warriors have found their private ditch, and can neither be pleaded nor prodded out of it. There are remnant cries of "Forward!" but they fall on pretty deaf ears since neither those who cry nor those who hear are clear which way *is* forward. And the enemy is all around. . . . The metaphor grows troublesome and we shall soon have to drop it. But it seems clear that the worth and meaning of the present skirmishing depends upon the total shape of the war. Is it true that, as Gerhard Niemeyer has written, "The time seems to have come in which Christians could free their minds from . . .

dependence on secular leadership and proceed to formulate political insights conceived in a third dimension, a dimension that cannot now be found in the convenient dichotomy of right and left"? If this is a question about the total shape of the war, then it is good that it be asked and, in time, answered. But the danger is that instead of a question about the total shape of the war, it may become a search for a position above the battle, or for the kind of pious politics which seems to be desired, for example, by Whittaker Chambers. It could be catastrophic (the word is still "reactionary") if being numbed by the battle we grew tired of the war, and let the gains won in battle be given back to the enemy.

* * * *

We are bound to go on fighting: and the peculiar business of Christian Action in terms of its origin and constitution is to fight against political idols and for social realism in the Church.

But we cannot fight well unless we take time to examine the total shape of the war: the perennial form of the Holy War against death and the Devil, and the contemporary form of the conflict, which is old and yet new.

Visser 't Hooft put it that the task of the Christian now as always is to prove that the Church exists. It would be put better, I think, in terms of the Westminster Confession, which speaks not of a visible and invisible Church, but of one Church which is sometimes more and sometimes less visible. The task therefore, now as always, is to make the true Church visible. We are concerned directly that the lines of the true Church are sadly blurred by social compromise, by racial injustice and the like. The problem here is real and urgent, and our immediate reason for being. But this would be the whole problem only if the nature of the Church were simple and political, rather than organic and evangelical. If the form of the Church—including a valid social stance and behavior—is to be recovered it must be recovered *whole*. And this means that even our social-political preoccupations are safely handled only in the context of a more comprehensive concern—the concern, as the motto of the ecumenical movement puts it, "that the Church be the Church."

This means regular and rigorous attention to at least four areas:

1. *Worship.* Much of our Protestant worship is simply *not edifying.* It has neither true Catholicity nor true contemporaneity. It is shapeless, superficial, sentimental, subjective. To take one illustration of the dependence of our particular concerns upon a deeper and a truer worship: very often our people, in their Sunday-by-Sunday dealing with the Bible, are at the mercy of the minister's caprice. They may or may not hear Amos, I Isaiah, or the Epistle of James. And if a "progressive" minister determines that they *shall* hear them, they are taken by surprise and can only conclude that the man is a radical if not a Communist, to be picking on passages like that. The minimum clearly is a lectionary faithfully followed, and preaching based thereon, so that both minister and people are brought under the discipline of the whole Scripture, with its wholesome oscillation between salvation and society, justification and justice.

2. *Doctrine.* There is no wholesome future for any group within the Church whose particular concerns are not continually articulated out of a profound and continually renovated understanding of the ultimate matters of faith. The obvious device for ensuring this within Christian Action, as it seems to me, would be to perpetuate within the wider group the kind of persistent theological endeavor which was characteristic of the Frontier Fellowship in its limited but effective life. Clearly the whole range of ecumenical work in theology is not our business. But theology most certainly is, in so far as the comprehension of our social witness depends upon it: and that means a great deal of theological work, unremittingly done. We must have within the movement a group—it need not be limited but it must be called and commissioned—whose sole and simple business it

is to talk theology, and to let the movement listen to their godly conversation.

3. *Discipline.* There can be no whole and wholesome concern for the Church's integrity which stops short with worship and doctrine, or which jumps from there into political action. We have seen that the church's integrity may be in inverse ratio to its public influence, and while we can be indifferent to neither, it is integrity rather than influence that must have priority, since all depends on it.

A patient and determined dealing with our local and denominational failures in the sphere of race is a great deal more important than pronouncements about segregation in Washington. Washington is not short on pronouncements, but is starved for a little pioneer daring by our Washington congregations. And so it goes.

An urgent present need is to explore—and who else will do it—the relevant form of economic behavior for the Christian community which has renounced monastic simplicity and fallen into simple conformity.

On this issue we might begin by careful and corporate study of Ralph Morton's *The Household of Faith,* shortly to be published by Association Press.

4. *Outreach.* Here we are on familiar ground, even allowing for the confused character of the present fighting. At least we know how to be busy here, though sometimes it seems that we only manage to *look* busy by duplicating the work of secular groups, which need participation rather than duplication.

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These jottings suggest only that, while we may be doubtful about precisely which way is forward, we need not be reduced to running round in circles.

An Aid to Political Decision

"The 1952 Election" is the title of the recently-released October issue of *Social Action.* Readers of *Christianity and Society* will find it invaluable source material not only during the campaign but in analyzing the new Administration and the new Congress, whoever is elected. It contains thumbnail sketches of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates; a review of the 82nd Congress and the prospects for the 83rd; an analysis of the record of each of the Senators up for re-election and a statement on the probabilities on the outcome of each election; a summary of the positions of the party platforms, the candidates, and the voting records of the parties on such issues as foreign policy, economic stability, public welfare, and civil rights; and an analysis of how the election can be won or lost by either major party.

You will want to have the important information which this magazine provides. You may write to the Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York, for copies. The price for one to nine copies is 25 cents each; for 10 to 99 copies, 20 cents each; and for 100 or more copies, 15 cents each.

The Nature of Our Task

John W. Turnbull

Part of the Executive Secretary's report to the second annual national conference of Christian Action in Alexandria, Virginia, on September 13th. A complete report of that conference is contained in the October Christian Action newsletter. If you do not have one, write Christian Action, 537 West 121st Street, New York 27, New York, for a copy.

As we have tried over the past year to arrive together at an understanding of just what it is that we are about in Christian Action, I suppose nothing has given us more trouble than the word and concept "action."

To be sure, we began with and we continue to have certain ideological differences —differences in theological position, differences in social interpretation, differences in judgment regarding certain specific issues. These differences have made it more difficult for us to interpret the nature of our task than it would have been if we had begun as those who were already in agreement on all of these points. We have therefore insisted that the continuing serious discussion of these issues and the movement toward a common interpretation of them, or at least toward an agreement on the way in which they ought to be approached, is essential to the ultimate health of our movement and thus to the ultimate success of what we are trying to do. It may be remarked, indeed, that it has been one of our greatest failures that, while we have said again and again that this kind of discussion ought to go on, we have in actual fact done relatively little of it. We have perhaps been so preoccupied with organization and with developing a "program" that we have neglected the kind of disinterested discussion of fundamentals which in the last analysis will be the only assurance of the fruitfulness of our organization and program. Let us hope that as we pass beyond the "growing pains", the adjustments and re-arrangements which are inevitable in the life of any new organization, we will all find time for more of this kind of thing.

It seems to me, however, that in a sense perhaps less fundamental but certainly not less important, we actually have found ourselves in substantial agreement on the principles on which we stand, and that our problem has been not so much deciding what we stand for as deciding how we ought to stand for it. The Statement of Purpose adopted at Washington last year states a clearly recognizable position on the social implications of the Christian Gospel in our time, and it is a position on which we have all agreed. It expresses our alarm at the complacency of the churches in speaking to contemporary political, economic, and social questions. It expresses even more forcibly our dismay at the efforts of some within the churches to identify the Gospel with particular economic and political philosophies, and to stifle or at least to overwhelm by force of sheer weight of influence the discussion of Christian social responsibility on any other terms. Our concern about this tendency within the churches parallels our concern about an almost identical tendency in our national life. In both cases, the Statement of Purpose expresses our conviction that the error of this approach is even more serious than what we believe to be the error of the particular views which are expressed; the more serious error is that the identification of the Gospel with *any* political or economic program, even if it is one about which we personally can get very enthusiastic, inevitably results in the distortion of the complexities both of Christian truth and of social reality. We have therefore insisted that our approach as Christians to the solution of social problems needs to be, in a memorable phrase of last year's confer-

ence (here slightly amended, at the regrettable expense of much of its color), "thoroughly pragmatic."

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To be "thoroughly pragmatic" evidently means to approach social questions with the commitment to understand and deal with them not just as instances of some general principle which need only be applied neatly in order to bring out a neat and final solution, but rather as complex situations which never quite fit any categories, and which require both a careful analysis of the facts and a careful examination of principles in order to approach their resolution. The recognition of the necessity of this kind of Christian pragmatism in social matters is a very important one, one whose significance we ought not to overlook. It is the flattest kind of rejection of the kind of simplicist ideological solution of social problems of which the churches have all too often been guilty, whether that solution be in the name of "freedom" or of the "brotherhood of man" or of the "love of God" or of the "absolute separation of church and state", or of any other principle treated as a formula. Our agreement just at this point is surely an important landmark in contemporary Protestant social thinking.

It is pretty easy to caricature this position. One need only take two or more characteristic phrases like "ambiguity", "complexity", "multiplicity of values", and "careful analysis", put them together into a sentence somehow, and there you have it! Those who are most eager for Christian Action to "stand up and be counted" or to be "at the firing-line" on behalf of certain urgent social concerns will be the first to recognize the danger that our position may in fact become a living caricature in which discretion has become indecision, caution has become immobility, and the recognition of the ambiguities present in every situation has become a denial of the Christian prophetic task.

Our Statement of Purpose, however, takes account of this danger, and we have all agreed that it is one which we must strongly guard against. The statement declares that, while rejecting the identification of any particular social system with the will of God, we nevertheless affirm our responsibility to develop ways of analyzing and constructing social policies which proclaim the love and justice of God in the most forcible terms in every human situation. Indeed, we affirm that it is only by analyzing and constructing in this way, in the absence of the appeal, either overt or covert, to a supposedly final "Christian social principle", that we can adequately speak Christian principles in terms which are relevant to the concrete circumstances of each situation. (That remark sounds like a caricature, too, but I can't seem to help it!) It may be, as someone remarked in what was probably the most memorable phrase of *this* year's conference, that it is not easy to "organize a parade on behalf of proximate justice", but I am afraid that that is just what we are committed to doing, even if some of us may not think that the analogy of the parade (I presume that it is just an analogy) is the most apt one for the kind of Christian witness that we are concerned to make. We must only be very sure that our fascination with the proximity of the justice does not muffle our drums, silence our bugles, sully our banners, deflect our fire, or whatever phrase you may like.

The point is that we have agreed that our resolute rejection of the doctrinaire does not discourage, but in fact gives the strongest impetus to, our speaking out strongly in concrete terms in relation to specific situations. Our Statement of Purpose does, in fact, do just that, and enunciates principles with regard to foreign policy, the national economy, racial segregation, party politics, and civil liberties. These principles derive their force for us just from the fact that they attempt to be realistic both in their relation to the condition of society as it is and in their relation to the central Christian convictions which lie behind all of them but which are not identified with any of them.

In short, we have agreed on the basic principle that the challenge which confronts the socially responsible Christian is one which must be met by the strongest affirmations of judgments of concrete, proximate justice in relation to specific problems, judgments which take into account both the depth of the Christian perspective from which they are made and the complexity of the situations to which they refer.

* * * *

Having agreed, then, that this is the responsibility which is laid upon Christian Action, and having agreed on certain specific judgments which we are now concerned to make in the light of that responsibility, we have, it appears to me, a firm base of what I shall call, to coin an unhappy phrase, "operational ideological agreement." The further discussion of more fundamental principles in which we ought unquestionably to be engaging need in no way diminish our ability to act now on the basis of this agreement.

But now we come to the difficult word, "act." We have agreed that it is not our job simply to reflect upon these principles, but to take some "action" upon them. The original call for the organization of Christian Action spoke of the need to "unite a strong core of churchmen around central Christian convictions about society" which would "formulate strategies for concerted effort in influencing the power centers" of their churches and communities. This was the call for a group which would exist not simply for self-edification but for the purpose of exercising active responsibility in the determination of the policies and programs of the churches and of the nation.

We have, however, been unsure about just how this active responsibility ought to be exercised. We have not had a clear enough idea of the resources we have on hand to decide just what kind of action we can most *effectively* undertake. We have not had a clear enough idea of the implications of the principles on which we agree to decide just what kind of action we can most *appropriately* undertake. I cannot claim to have the answer to this question, but I do think that what we have done and thought over the past year has brought us to a clearer understanding of what we really mean by "action" than we may have thought we had.

I take it to be a basic premise that the area within which we act is primarily that of the religious community, the churches in their various institutional manifestations, local congregations, denominations, councils of churches, and the rest. The religious community is our primary area of action both on account of the nature of our resources and on account of the nature of our principles.

On account of the nature of our resources, because we are not sufficient in number, in strength, or in financial resources to have in many cases a very profound and lasting direct impact upon society at large even if we wanted to. On the other hand, we are church people, and many of us are in positions of leadership, I may say of power, within the churches. When we use our resources through the institutions of the churches we multiply our effectiveness because we use them where they carry some weight. All of us are in a position, and all of us can get ourselves into a better position, to advance our common convictions through the religious institutions to which we have direct access. Now this does not mean at all that we should not also seek ways to act through other kinds of institutions, like political parties, special interest groups and organizations, and the rest. Quite the contrary: it is in the interest of the responsible participation of churchmen in groups of this kind that we are seeking to speak, and we ourselves surely ought to be the first to accept this responsibility. But it does mean that as we are finding our way to these centers of power in society, we should find our way not simply as individuals, nor even simply as members of Christian Action, but as churchmen who are seeking both to bring the power of the churches to bear in these institutions and to remind the churches of their duty to exercise that power responsibly. Thus, if

we are to have our greatest effect, the point of reference for our action will always be the churches.

On account of the nature of our principles, simply because we are convinced that Christian social responsibility is something to be exercised not just by a few people from time to time as they happen to become interested in particular issues, but is the task of the whole Church in proclaiming the whole of the Gospel to the whole of human society.

I said that the area within which we act is *primarily* that of the religious community. There is no doubt but that from time to time situations arise in which we find the churches unable or unwilling to act. At such times we are surely justified in acting "on our own" in the interest of a stand which will be untaken if we do not take it. But we will subvert our basic purpose if we allow ourselves to become addicted to this way of operating, for it will eventually separate us from the churches and contradict our fundamental and long-range goal which is to organize and make responsible the powerful resources of the churches themselves. Even if the results are not as immediately spectacular or as satisfying to our desire to express ourselves, the eventual consequences of our concerted drive within the religious institutions will in the end be more significant than the on-the-spot stands which we take.

* * * *

Well, if our area of action is, then, primarily within the churches, what do we act for and how do we go about it? It seems to me that we act for three things:

1. For the setting of the church's social message in the context of the whole of the church's life. This means of course that we insist that the churches not forget their responsibility to carry on programs of social education and action as one phase of their work of preaching the Gospel, and that we exert our influence to prevent these programs from being thwarted by those who believe that this area is no part of the church's proper concern. It means that we will seek ways of getting more careful, better informed, and more effective work done by these special committees. But more important than this, it means that we will work for the realization by the churches of the social dimension of every phase of their life and work. Thus we will be concerned that "social action" be not simply the concern of one department of the churches, however effective that department may be, but that the principles of Christian social responsibility, carefully thought out and intelligently applied, shall be part of the fibre of the whole of the church's life—of its worship, of its art, of its theology, of its evangelism, of its education, and the rest.

2. For the setting of the church's social message in the context of the whole of the life of human society. We will not share the secular presupposition that the church is entitled to speak only on certain so-called "religious" questions, and that apart from its occasional deliverances on these matters, it is not entitled to participate in the making and criticism of policy in all areas of social life. We will instead insist that the church is a participant in society, that as such it holds certain power in society, and that because it holds that power it is called to exercise it responsibly, in society's political and economic life, domestic and international, in its education, in its art, and in its various forms of social organization.

3. For the setting of the church's social message in the context of the whole of the life of each churchman. The church needs to recommend to its members that their responsibility to society is not exercised simply by their taking part in certain good causes from time to time. As human beings who work, play, vote, buy and sell, express opinions to others, and bring their influence to bear in all kinds of social organizations, their primary responsibility to God and to their fellow men is that which they exercise as they are doing these things. The place in which they need to bring their Christian consciences to bear is just here, in their

vocations—a term in which we include not only the work they do for a living, but the whole of the life into which they are called and in which they participate. It is here that the churches need and are just beginning to give primary guidance to their members—in helping them to understand the religious significance of all that they do and in offering them ways of witnessing to the love and justice of God which are more effective are more important than simply serving on occasional committees for the benefit of widows and orphans or meeting before breakfast every Monday morning for prayer with their fellow workers.

How, then, are we to act? By finding those within the churches who are willing to combine their energies and resources into a common program which will make our convictions felt in many departments of many different religious institutions. By finding those who will work seriously together on a program acknowledging the church's responsibility in national and international life. By finding those laymen and preachers who will accept common principles and work together for directing most effectively their efforts to make them felt in the places where they live and work and exert influence.

The test of the effectiveness of our action will not be the number of resolutions we pass or the number of projects which we undertake as a group, but the number of people we can draw into this kind of effort, the quality of the theological and social analysis with which we can provide them, the depth of the sense of commitment, dedication, and common loyalty which we can develop with them, the enthusiasm with which we can fill them, and the intelligence and resourcefulness with which we can direct our common energies toward those problems which most need our own particular kind of special attention as a group.

It seems to me that this kind of long-range task is the only excuse for the existence of an organization like Christian Action, and that if we fail in this kind of action we will fail to be the leaven in the life of the churches which we feel it is our own particular vocation to be.

Among Those Present

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Social Action at Claremont

Ray Gibbons

The recent re-examination of the Council for Social Action by the Congregationalists was viewed with interest by all of Protestantism, as a barometer for the future role of social action in the churches. Here is a report and interpretation of the action taken at the meeting of the General Council in June.

A thousand delegates of the Congregational Christian Churches, and as many more associate delegates, assembled for the biennial meeting of the General Council in Claremont, California, June 18–25. Two big issues had to be faced—the proposed merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the criticism of the Council for Social Action. Dr. Vere Loper moderated the discussions so successfully there was general satisfaction at the outcome. The delegates spoke of it as "the Claremont spirit."

The criticisms of the C. S. A., its positions, policies, and personnel, have been accelerated by a group of laymen known as the Committee to Oppose Congregational Political Action. They objected that the C. S. A. was biased, that it spoke for only a small minority, that it followed the line of the C. I. O., or the State Department, and that it was staffed by some persons known to the Un-American Activities Committee. Worst of all, the C. S. A. was political. It maintained a "lobbyist" in Washington. So the title of the opponents' booklet attacking C. S. A. was "They're *Using* Our Church" and the large-letter subtitle, "To Play Politics." They employed staff, sought out laymen who would form opposition committees in local churches, and urged them to cut C. S. A. off the budget of the church. This spring the Executive Committee of the General Council, after hearing the spokesmen of the critics, appointed a nine-man Board of Review to examine the criticisms and report to the General Council. Finding it impossible to make a careful study before the General Council meetings in June, the Board requested the Council to take no decisive action at its meetings in Claremont, pending the Board's full review and report. Such was the situation when the meetings opened in Claremont.

While the delegates were stopped from major decisions they did what they could to deal with several of the tangential issues and criticisms. One of these was a by-law of the General Council which permitted the 250 C. S. A. Associates to vote on matters affecting the C. S. A. in the General Council. This provision was intended to parallel the voting privileges of the Corporate Members of the two major denominational Boards, but it could have been used to form a caucus within the General Council. The C. S. A. requested the by-law be revised and the General Council did so.

An even more remote issue was the so-called "Profit Motive" resolution, adopted by the 1934 General Council. While the C. S. A. was not responsible for the resolution and had not made it a corner-stone of its policy, as was charged, the resolution had been used to scourge the agency from its infancy. To free the C. S. A. of this incubus the General Council Executive Committee proposed it be revoked. There was a surprising amount of opposition from the floor. A European missionary pleaded that it would be misunderstood abroad as the capitulation of American Christians to the dogmas of capitalism. Others said they had voted for it in 1934 and might do so again if conditions returned to what they were then. Another inquired if our actions then and now really meant that we were opposed to small profits but in favor of big ones. The demand for a more positive statement sent the motion back to committee for revision.

When it again emerged the resolution noted "the unusual economic stress" of the time in which the 1934 resolution was adopted. It did not "pass judgment" upon the past but stated that the 1934 resolution "does not represent its views and disclaims it." Positively it declared that "no economic system embodies the perfect will of God." This revised resolution was approved by a vote of 804 to 8, with 20 abstentions.

Saturday afternoon the Board of Review conducted a two-and-one-half hour hearing on the C. S. A. Four speakers represented the critics—Dr. Howard J. Conn, pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis; Jan J. Erteszek, Los Angeles; Mr. Eugene E. Wilson, Hartford, Connecticut, formerly president United Aircraft Corporation; and Dr. Russell J. Clinchy, New York, presently a staff member of the Foundation for Economic Education. Among other things, they charged the C. S. A. was unCongregational, followed the British Labor Party line, threatened American freedom, and unwisely involved the churches in politics. They recommended it be stripped of its power to act and its status as a Council, thereafter to be known as the Commission for Social Education. Furthermore they urged that it should be independent of the denomination, supported by individuals outside the denominational budget.

Persons speaking for the C. S. A. were Dean Liston Pope of Yale Divinity School; Dr. Emerson G. Hangen, pastor of the Long Beach Congregational Church of Southern California; Miss Ruth I. Seabury, secretary of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions; and Mr. Gordon Mikkelson, a Minnesota layman with eighteen years' experience analyzing and reporting pressure group operations as a news reporter for national wire services and daily newspapers. These speakers claimed that the function of social action was an essential part of the Gospel and that it belonged within the Church. They spoke highly of the work of Thomas B. Keehn, Galen R. Weaver, Francis W. McPeek and the other staff members. Mr. Mikkelson charged that the black booklet, "They're *Using* Our Church" violated Congregational principles of fair play and contained sixteen positive mis-statements of fact.

Following the speeches the delegates had their three-minute innings at the microphones. Donald L. Benedict, one of the pastors of the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York, spoke for his people, forced to live in one of the worst of American slums. He testified to their reactions when he took them on a Washington Seminar arranged by the C. S. A. They felt they had a free voice speaking for them in Washington that was not the voice of Marcantonio. They rejoiced to find the church had an agency concerned about their problems. Bedros Baharian, a Massachusetts minister, demanded to know who had written the black book. Why weren't the authors present to defend it? Were they trying to hide behind a 3 cent stamp? "I think this Council is entitled to know who wrote the book, how much it cost, how it was mailed out, so that we may be able, in a fair way, to evaluate its criticisms. If those who wrote it do not care to defend it, can we not put it in the same class as the infamous Protocols of Zion that were declared illegitimate in 1924?"

The major presentations of the C. S. A. received strong support. The C. S. A. evening program, at which the Honorable Paul Hoffman spoke, filled to capacity the large Bridges Auditorium. Two years before, the General Council had authorized the C. S. A. to make a special study of the Christian Basis for Social Action. A committee of 30 theologians, pastors, and laymen prepared and distributed a draft statement, along with an 80-page Group Leaders Manual prepared by the staff. More than 100 churches participated in this four-session study and returned carefully prepared comments and criticisms to the Commission. In the light of this study the Commission prepared a short and a long form of the Statement, for General Council approval and recommendation to the churches. The actions proposed by the C. S. A. upon the

basis of this two-year study were unanimously adopted.

The other major presentation was the published report, "The Stewardship of the Council for Social Action." This forty-four page printed report of the origins, operations, viewpoints, and accomplishments included the names of all persons associated with C. S. A., a statement of its policy and procedures, and excerpts from its policy statements in all the areas of its work. It explained what the C. S. A. program in Washington was, why C. S. A. had registered under the Lobbying Act, and for whom the C. S. A. spoke in its testimony. Usually such a report is received and placed on file but it was suggested that this time it be made a vote of confidence or no confidence. The day prior to the vote the Moderator announced that there would be a motion to "approve the report of the C. S. A. with commendation" and that a favorable vote would be interpreted as approval of the C. S. A. in broad outline, though not in every detail. He repeated this announcement before the vote was taken to "approve . . . with commendation." The recorded vote on this motion was 689 Yes, 34 No, 19 Abstaining.

This was as near an expression of its mind as the General Council was allowed to make. The issues on which there is the greatest division of opinion await the report of the Board of Review. In the meantime, the critics continue to publish and distribute their attacks unabated and the friends of the C. S. A. take new courage and press their program more vigorously through the churches and their leaders. In a time when social action is widely criticized the General Council went as far as it could in support of the C. S. A. The sun which shone at Claremont, California, will pierce the smog which temporarily hangs over social action in the churches.

Our Next Issue . . .

will be devoted to discussions of American responsibilities in foreign affairs, with special attention to the role of the churches in supporting responsible American foreign policy. Dr. A. William Loos, Education Secretary of the Church Peace Union, will be the Guest Editor.

REVIEWS

Niebuhr and Some Critics

The Irony of American History, by Reinhold Niebuhr. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952. 174 pages. $2.50.

By this time the central theme and argument of Reinhold Niebuhr's new book will be familiar to readers of *Christianity and Society*. *The Irony of American History* is a brilliant and penetrating discourse on the American experience in terms of the dilemmas and ambiguities of American power. In a sphere beyond this, it represents an extension of Niebuhr's commentary on the very nature of history; for many of the ironies which he detects in the American scene are less peculiarities of our American past than they are incidents of the historical process itself, displayed, perhaps, with special sharpness of outline against the backdrop of American innocence and idealism. Indeed, Niebuhr's development in this work of the concept of "irony", which he distinguishes from the fortuitous incongruities of pathos and from the self-doomed destruction of tragedy, and which he regards as the distinguishing mark of the Christian attitude toward history, makes *The Irony of American History* the necessary sequel to and culmination of his recent *Faith and History*.

This new work is also a continuation of Niebuhr's many writings on politics and society; for he treats American civilization as "an unalloyed exemplar" of our modern liberal culture in general and finds in its dilemmas the general pattern by which bourgeois pretensions of virtue, wisdom, and power come into ironic juxtaposition with the actualities of history. He traces with compassion and wisdom the slow process by which experience has triumphed over dogma in our national economic policy, with the gradual acceptance of the necessities of tolerable social organization in an industrial society. In similar fashion, he analyzes the perplexities of the American involvement in "the international class struggle." Twenty-two years ago, it is interesting to note, Dr. Niebuhr wrote on this same problem and concluded pessimistically that "such evidence as is available certainly does not encourage the faith that we shall develop a political genius equal to the responsibilities thrust upon us by our imperial power." Today he seems a trifle more optimistic about the possibility of America's relating itself creatively to the world community.

If, that is, we can understand the full dimensions of our ironic predicament—here lies the essential challenge. And here, too, lies the quality which, above all, in his mind, distinguishes irony from tragedy and pathos. For neither a tragic nor a pathetic situation is dissolved when a person becomes conscious of his involvement in it; while an ironic situation, Dr. Niebuhr contends, must dissolve, if men or nations are made aware of their complicity in it. "The ironic elements in American history," he concludes, "can be overcome, in short, only if American idealism comes to terms with the limits of all human striving, the fragmentariness of all human wisdom, the precariousness of all historic configurations of power, and the mixture of good and evil in all human virtue." The process of the abatement of pretension he calls contrition; and a sense of contrition, in his judgment, provides the most hopeful basis for wise and effective action.

This would all seem straightforward enough, even for those who might not share Dr. Niebuhr's theological assumptions. But a further range of ironies resides in certain curiosities of the book's reception. Most breathless and overwrought of all the reviewers was Mr. Anthony West who, in a weird piece in the *New Yorker,* interpreted Niebuhr's argument to be

> that man cannot by the use of reason control or plan his future; his destiny is arranged for him by God, and it is

> sin for him to try to do it. The political implication here is that God is against such organizations as the United Nations [!] and, indeed, against any major human effort.

Mr. West went on to denounce the work as "a veiled attack on some concepts that are essential to democratic ideas, the chief of them man's trust in reason"; he assailed "Dr. Niebuhr's defeatism," dismissed his politics as providing "an excuse for not trying . . . moral justification for taking the easy and timid way out," and concluded by inveighing against "his pallid pessimistic declarations" and "the rejection of reason, which is fundamental to them, and the lack of confidence in men that they express."

The only possible comment on Mr. West's agitation is Emerson's "So hot? my little Sir"—unless one is to assume that he construed Dr. Niebuhr's work as a subtle personal attack on *The Outline of History*. But a more moderate and thoughtful objection along intellectually distinct but emotionally related lines came from Professor Morton G. White in the *New Republic*. Professor White extracted from *The Irony of American History* the picture of ourselves as "sinners in the hands of an anonymous force which always determines that our hopes will be denied, that our plans will be destroyed, and that our predictions will be falsified by a Cartesian demon." Niebuhr, in his view, licensed pragmatism for the common man and the politician but denied it to the philosopher and social scientist. Moreover, Niebuhr believed in original sin, which White curiously interprets as meaning that "man is necessarily evil"; and he talked about contrition, a word with sinister theological overtones, instead of agreeing with Bertrand Russell that "it is not by making others suffer that we shall achieve our own happiness."

Thus, for Anthony West, Niebuhr is a dangerous enemy of democracy and reason; for Morton White, he is a part-time enemy, at least, of pragmatism, political experimentation, and social analysis. It is impossible to believe that Mr. West read Niebuhr's book; he too clearly confuses it with some other book by a highly different author (probably Torquemada). But Professor White, who is one of the best of our younger philosophers, does show some signs of having read the work. This makes it all the more difficult to see how he has succeeded in so generally misunderstanding it. Niebuhr, of course, was primarily concerned in the book to enforce the lesson that he has pointed up so many times before: that man invites disaster when he seeks to play the role of God in history; that the self, whether individual or collective, must have a "modest awareness of the limits of its own knowledge and power." But this emphasis on the fact of human limitation was by no means a call for quietism or resignation, or a rejection of human purpose and reason and experiment. Indeed, Niebuhr repeatedly made clear in the course of the book (as he has made clear in person all his life) that moral man can and must act in the cause of proximate and practical justice. "The recognition of historical limits," he wrote at one point, "must not, however, lead to a betrayal of cherished values and historical attainments. Historical pragmatism exists on the edge of opportunism, but cannot afford to fall into the abyss." And he found in Lincoln—hardly a defeatist or an irrationalist—the ideal for our time. "This combination of a moral resoluteness about the immediate issues with a religious awareness of another dimension of meaning and judgment must be regarded as almost a perfect model of the difficult but not impossible task of remaining loyal and responsible toward the moral treasures of a free civilization on the one hand while yet having some religious vantage point over the struggle."

Still, there may be a portent in the reaction which Morton White typifies. One feels, indeed, that he was reacting less to Niebuhr's book than to felt pressures in the intellectual atmosphere. Mr. Justice Jackson described these pressures the other day when he spoke about the trend toward

"compulsory godliness." Whittaker Chambers has instructed us that the essential conflict is between those who believe in God and those who reject him; and William F. Buckley, Jr., now seeks to make religious orthodoxy a canon of academic tenure. The attack on Oliver Wendell Holmes as a relativist and, *ipso facto*, a totalitarian has gone very far in Catholic intellectual circles.

These are real and dangerous tendencies; but the "irony" of trying to impute them to Niebuhr is self-evident to any one who has ever read Niebuhr's warnings about the covert idolatries concealed in the worship of God. In one sense, Niebuhr's great intellectual contribution has been to draw a firm line between pragmatism and religion —a line designed to keep the absolute out of the relative, and at the same time to prevent the relative from confusing itself with the absolute. In the past it may have seemed more important to hold this line against the simplistic followers of John Dewey, who wanted to swallow up the absolute in the relative. In the future it may be more important to hold this line against the simplistic believers in religion, who wish to swallow up the relative in the absolute.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Faith and History: A New Approach

History and Human Relations, by Herbert Butterfield. New York: Macmillan, 1952. And, *Christianity in European History,* by Herbert Butterfield. London: Collins, 1952.

Among the many recent writers on theology and history Herbert Butterfield is surely one of the most fascinating and rewarding. A professor of modern history at Cambridge, he has established his reputation in books on Napoleon, Machiavelli, the origins of modern science, and several other subjects. Lately he has turned his mature mind to writing about Christianity.

His earliest book in this field, *Christianity and History,* was reviewed in this journal, Winter 1950–51. Like it, these later two are beautifully written in a semi-popular style. As a historian Butterfield refreshingly avoids some of the professional language of theologians, but analyzes history with penetrating theological insight. His work is far less massive than Toynbee's; but in avoiding the weight of systematization and speculation of Toynbee's great work, Butterfield is likely to be more appealing to Protestant thinkers.

I do not know Butterfield's detailed political views or how close he stands to the political-economic attitudes of Christian Action. But he very clearly agrees with us in avoiding the doctrinaire lines of left and right, and for the same reasons. He is empirical in handling evidence, and he analyzes problems with a pragmatism guided by biblical insight.

The first of these volumes is a collection of varied essays. "The Tragic Element in Modern International Conflict" analyzes the world tension of today and shows how an element of compassion can make us, not only better Christians, but also better interpreters of the great contemporary struggle. "The Dangers of History" shows how, human nature being what it is, the amateur or professional study of history frequently re-enforces the prejudices of the student rather than purging them. It should make us both wiser and more charitable readers of history. So the other essays contribute their warnings against pride, their appreciation of divine grace and providence, their awareness of the wonders and depths of human personalities who are the subject of history.

The second book contains just three lectures on the inter-relations between Christianity and civilization in the West. It concludes with a chapter on "History, Religion, and Ethics," in which the author shows great clarity and profundity in portraying the spirit in which the Christian fights for righteousness in the world.

Roger L. Shinn

Essays on World Order

Foundations of World Organization, edited by Lyman Bryson, *et. al.* New York: Harper and Bros., 1952. 498 pp. $4.00.

This Report of papers and discussions in the eleventh annual Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion is as uneven as might be expected, but contains some very worthwhile and valuable material in the midst.

The paper by Dr. Emory Ross, Chapter XV—"Colonies and World Organization: Non-governmental Responsibilities and Structure", was the best and most fully discussed item presented. Certainly Richard Hocking's "Experiences and Lessons Drawn from the University of Chicago/ University of Frankfurt Project" (Chapter VII) was one of the most lively and understanding reports on American program in post-war Germany, although it suffers slightly from a patronizing attitude toward educators in Military Government. (No one who really wanted to work on a personal basis with German educators was put off, whether with OMGUS or a voluntary association; our moralists always want to make "the people" more sensitive than they really are on such matters.) There are interesting chapters on the contributions of the Christian movement (Ch. III), the labor movement (Chs. XI, XII), the American Friends Service Committee (Ch. XIII).

It is when comments are made on a subject such as "Contributions of the Christian Movement to Foundations of World Organization" that the essential incoherence of the assembly stands out. Following the paper a comment concludes: "The Protestant churches had no decisive role in the modern efforts which led toward the League of Nations or the United Nations." (p. 101) This statement is so palpably false, both as to the personalities and the organizations which shaped public opinion during and after World Wars I and II, that one comes face to face speedily with the fact that a considerable sector of the habitual attendants at this annual Conference, and also of its Executive Board, represent movements and attitudes (in this case a flippant secularism) which have been waning in influence and importance since the Great Depression.

Thus the major division of the book which handles "Philosophical and Religious Bases for World Organization" is particularly and spectacularly disappointing. There is no consciousness, among writers who are with two exceptions relatively unknown either as religious thinkers or religious community leaders, of the existence of such major integrative efforts as the World Council of Churches, Una Sancta, the Organization for World Brotherhood, Maria Laach, etc. For discussional purposes, it is not necessary that they should be "for" or "against" any one of them; but they ought to be informed, or see to it that the Conference has the participation of those who are informed.

The second major disappointment lies in the area of ideological orientation rather than competence and content. This stands out strikingly in the first essay, Chapter I—"Experience in Transnational Activities and Organization", by Quincy Wright of the University of Chicago. Professor Wright cites four conclusions, and proceeds to discuss them; two of them are relevant to my point.

> "1. The problem lies in the world of beliefs and opinions rather than in that of conditions.
>
> 3. Peaceful solutions of international problems are sometimes not desired because the maintenance of national solidarity or other external political purposes can be forwarded through maintaining an external enemy." (p. 1)

Both of these points seem fairly well taken, if stated a bit too ideationally for some of us. But there is no appreciation, and other essays throughout the volume suffer from the same lack, of the reasons *why* "they" do not desire such an obvious good as international amity. There is a rational-

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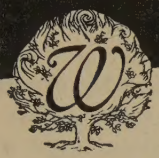

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istic assumption about the remark, and beyond that there is the assumption that calling attention to the fact will somehow inspire rational men to go and do better by global concerns. Thus, if the reader presses behind articles dealing with specialized problems in the field, he all too frequently plunges into a bottomless void—beholding in stark outline presuppositions which may have seemed sound enough in happier seasons, but seem strangely out of place in the middle of the Twentieth Century.

Franklin H. Littell

An Old Problem Re-examined

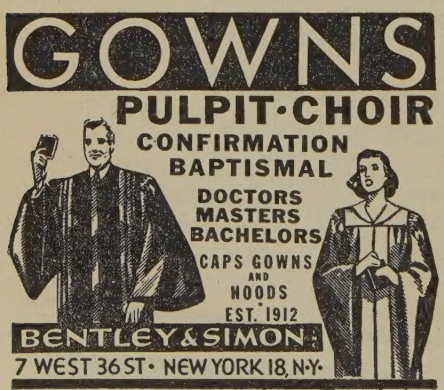
On Proving God, by Roger Hazelton. New York: Harper and Bros., 1952. 186 pages. $2.50.

This is an interesting book. It is interesting because of its title-subject, which has not enjoyed the best repute in much contemporary theology. It is interesting because of its approach, which is not to offer a neat proof of God, but to discuss the whole matter of "proving God." It is interesting because of its charming style, which is perhaps a bit too fluid for the degree of logical cogency it proposes to affirm. The book is interesting because of its discussion of the issues, fresh and vital, but as a systematic treatment it is somewhat spotty.

In the foreword of the book Hazelton decries the esoteric character of much theological conversation, suggesting quite properly that theological discussion ought to seek to be understandable to the common man and rationally intelligible in the best sense of the term. This might appear as though Hazelton would write something of an American-Congregationalist version of C. S. Lewis, but this book hardly fits the expectation. Instead it maintains a professional level of discussion, fulfilling Hazelton's more immediate concern (as expressed in a later sentence of the foreword): "to give Christian teachers and preachers a real appetite for the burden of proof which we all assume as belief in God becomes increasingly difficult." In short, Hazelton is passing the task of translation on to his readers as they minister to others.

Assessed then as a book for professional religious thinkers, one overarching lack of clarity is obvious in the work. Strangely enough, this is in the area of the faith-reason controversy, an area in which Hazelton has written so admirably in *Renewing the Mind.* Hazelton starts by talking like the strictest of rationalists, and uses as illustrations of those who attack the place of proof, not Karl Barth and his disciples, but Paul Tillich and John Baillie! Then later, at the points at which one might expect him to clinch his rational arguments, he says (p. 83, and the theme is elaborated in Chapter V) "proof cannot be offered apart from faith but is forever built upon it." This is, of course, where many of us are content for Hazelton to end, but it makes us the more surprised at the earlier attacks upon those who do likewise.

Edward LeRoy Long, Jr.



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